



**Kitsap Sun**  

News Sports Business Opinion Entertainment Lifestyles Media Jobs Homes Cars Classified

Local News Blogs Databases Events Submit Code 911 Communities Weather Obituaries Your News State National RSS Feeds

## Bee-keeping skills learned on the inside help him survive on the outside

By Amy Phan  
Posted May 10, 2011 at 7:43 p.m.


Discuss Print A A A 



PHOTO BY MEEGAN M. REID, MEEGAN M. REID // BUY THIS PHOTO

**WSP** We're Hiring!

Cadet testing  
January 12, 2013  
Starts at 7:30am



WSP Academy 631 W. Dayton-Airport Road Shelton, WA

**CLICK HERE**

Most Popular

Viewed Commented Emailed

■ **LETTER TO THE EDITOR | Upset by same-sex marriage photo**  
Published 12/12/2012 at 1:32 p.m.  107 comments

## Bee-keeping skills learned on the inside help him survive on the outside

By [Amy Phan](#)

Posted May 10, 2011 at 7:43 p.m.

Read more: <http://www.kitsapsun.com/news/2011/may/10/bee-keeping-skills-learned-on-the-inside-help-on/#ixzz1p3sDCrI>

PORT ORCHARD — Behind the office where he works, Daniel Travatte, 38, attempts bee-keeping for the first time outside prison walls.

The first batch of Italian bees he's raised since leaving Cedar Creek Corrections Center arrived a few weeks ago. About 70,000 bees sit in a hive he built. He checks it daily for

new eggs laid by the queen, using the skills he picked up in the prison's bee-keeping program.

Released in June, bee-keeping is Travatte's link to the eight years he served for first-degree robbery. Officials at Cedar Creek introduced him to bee-keeping three years ago, as part of the prison system's effort to help inmates focus on something positive — and eco-friendly — while being incarcerated.

Now that he's out, it's also an important link to his future. The beeswax he harvests goes into the massage oils, face creams and lip balm he produces as a side business. The work of tending the hive keeps him away from "negative thoughts."

"I find it very relaxing to work with my bees," he said. "They are a lot of fun to work with."

[Daniel Travatte, bee keeper](#)





Travatte was sentenced to 10 years for bringing a revolver into a Bremerton pharmacy in April 2003 and demanding prescription drugs. He was put on community supervision in November after serving close to eight years — two years were knocked off his sentence for good behavior.

Court documents tell the story of the robbery. Travatte, then 30, entered the drugstore armed and demanded Dilaudid, morphine, MS-Contin and OxyContin — all painkillers — from the pharmacist.

A customer entering the store distracted Travatte, and the pharmacist grabbed a baseball bat and hit him on the head. The two fell to the floor trying to reach for the gun. The pharmacist's daughter grabbed the bat while the two were fighting and hit Travatte several times, forcing the gun loose.

"I was in bad condition," Travatte said, remembering the incident. "I was probably acting very drunk and obviously wasn't thinking clearly."

The robbery was the bookend to a long criminal history that began to support a drug habit that started when he was first prescribed painkillers at 17. He'd previously been convicted of second-degree theft, forgery and possession of stolen property.

He shuffled through several Washington state jails before being promoted to Cedar Creek — a minimum prison center in Littlerock, south of Olympia. A few years into his sentence, the prison introduced the bee program — the first in the state to do so — eventually partnering with biologists from The Evergreen State College to teach inmates technical beekeeping skills like treatment strategies for parasitic bees and various beekeeping styles.

About 15 inmates have gone through the program, said Cedar Creek bee program supervisor Vicki Briggs.

"Daniel was one of the first guys through the program. And he was a model inmate — I would give him reading the night before and the next day he would talk about it," she said.

During his incarceration, Travatte wrote for several beekeeping magazines, detailing the prison program.

"He could do the work of several people," Briggs said. "He really dove into it."

Travatte said the program was therapeutic.

"I was vindictive, vengeful and angry," he said. "The program let me look forward to more positive things, like possibly having bees when I got out."

The inmates learned how to harvest wax and turn it into lotion and lip balm products as part of the program. Travatte has begun producing the products on his own. And though he hasn't made any money on them yet, he hopes to soon. In the meantime, he works full time as an office manager in Kitsap County and takes care of 28 chickens and two ducks.

Based on his past criminal history, Travatte is considered a high-risk violent offender likely to re-offend, according to the Department of Correction.

Travatte knows how easy it is to fall back into the drug world. He checks in with his community supervisor and keeps his conversations with the inmates there to a minimum. He avoids contact with those he knew while using.

And instead of thinking about his criminal past, he's focusing on the future.

"I should have come out nasty and bitter," he said.

But the bees "gave me something to do that was positive."

[© 2011 Kitsap Sun. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed](#)

Read more: <http://www.kitsapsun.com/news/2011/may/10/bee-keeping-skills-learned-on-the-inside-help-on/#ixzz1lp3k28xL>